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«Help My Unbelief»: Dynamics of Religious Belief and Religious Motivation of Ukraine Residents with Consistent and Inconsistent Social Statuses

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Ташченко Анна, Федоренко Ольга. «Допоможи моєму невірству»: динаміка релігійної віри та релігійної мотивації жителів України з консистентними й неконсистентними соціальними статусами. У статті здійснено аналіз взаємозв'язку релігійності та статусної (не)консистентності в Україні в умовах тривалих соціальних трансформацій і кризових подій. Мета статті – виявлення спільних і відмінних рис релігійної віри та релігійної мотивації серед статусно консистентних і неконсистентних категорій населення України. Емпіричну базу становили дані World Values Survey за 1996, 2006, 2011 та 2020 роки; аналіз здійснено на основі виділення п'яти статусних категорій із поєднанням різних рівнів освіти й доходу та залучення шести індикаторів релігійної віри й релігійної мотивації. Засвідчено, що низькостатусна консистентність частіше пов'язана з вищим рівнем релігійної віри та позитивнішим ставленням до релігійності, тоді як високостатусна консистентність асоціюється з дистанціюванням від релігії та церков. Виявлено також відмінності між типами статусної неконсистентності: для освітньо-дохідної неконсистентності зафіксовано критичніше ставлення до

церков та релігії, ніж для дохідно-освітньої. Статистично значущі статусні розбіжності зафіксовано в 1996 й 2011 рр., тоді як у 2006 та 2020 рр. різні та консистентні й неконсистентні категорії зберігають лише натяки на наявність певних усталених зразків ставлення до релігійної віри та релігійної мотивації.

Ключові слова: статусна консистентність, статусна неконсистентність, релігійна віра, релігійна мотивація, релігійність.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Ukraine is undergoing profound transformations driven both by political and economic challenges as well as by the full-scale war. These processes significantly affect the sphere of religion. In particular, scholars point to the presence of religious ambivalence, which constitutes a component of the broader social ambivalence of Ukrainian society and is most often manifested in the tension between declarative and practical religiosity. For example, a high level of self-identification as believers combined with lower levels of active participation in religious life or religious communities (Tienin & Salnikova, 2025). At the same time, these transformations are accompanied by changes in the social structure of society, expressed in the instability and contradictions of the social positions of certain groups, or what is referred to as status inconsistency.

The concept of status (in)consistency is grounded in classical studies of social stratification and social hierarchies. Its origins lie in the works of Sorokin (1964) and Lenski (1954). Further development of this approach in the post-socialist context has led to a series of studies devoted to the specificity of status structures in Central and Eastern European societies. Among these, the works of Majkowski (1985) and Wesolowski (2014) are noteworthy, who showed that transformation processes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe lead to a massive divergence between educational, material, and professional statuses. In the Ukrainian context, Kovalisko (2010) demonstrated the presence of significant regional differences in status consistency using the example of two cities – Lviv and Donetsk, and Kuzmuk (2018) revealed the prevalence of status inconsistency of class positions. The study by Tashchenko, Yakovenko, and Yakovenko (2019) focuses on analyzing the relationship between status consistency/inconsistency and value systems in contemporary Ukrainian society. These studies of status (in)consistency show that differences between statuses are a persistent characteristic of transformational societies and have consequences for value orientations, social expectations, and adaptation strategies of individuals. These works create an important theoretical basis for considering status consistency as a factor that structures not only social positions, but also symbolic and worldview orientations.

The theme of religiosity in Ukrainian sociological discourse is broadly represented in the works of S. Salnikova, M. Parashchevin, D. Myronovych, P. Tienin, Yu. Savelyev, and others. A significant contribution to the measurement and operationalization of religiosity was made by S. Salnikova, who in a number of works showed the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon (Salnikova, 2010a; 2010b). In co-authorship with D. Myronovych, S. Salnikova analyzes the relationship between religion and civil society, showing that religious organizations in Ukraine increasingly perform social integration and compensatory functions (Salnikova & Myronovych, 2013). Myronovych (2013) separately addresses the phenomenon of religious conversion. Parashchevin (2019; 2022) focuses in his works on the transformation of the confessional landscape of Ukraine, interfaith relations and the politicization of religion, in the context of the Tomos and the war after 2014. He demonstrates that religious identity is increasingly intertwined with national and political identity, and trust in churches is formed not only on the basis of religious beliefs, but also by geopolitical and security orientations. This idea is developed by Tienin and Salnikova (2025), analyzing the state of the religious sphere in conditions of social ambivalence. In a later work, Salnikova and Savelyev (2025) analyze the interaction of political institutions and the religious sphere in Ukraine before and during the full-scale war, comparing national security and freedom of religion. They point out that religious issues often acquire political content regardless of the level of personal religiosity of respondents.

Foreign scholars have also shown interest in the religious sphere in Ukraine. For example, Charles (2010) analyzed the secularization of Ukraine and other countries based on WVS data, classifying them according to the combination of religiosity levels and interpersonal trust. He placed Ukraine, along with Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Romania, among societies characterized by low religiosity and

high trust. Casanova (2022) focuses on the institutional and geopolitical dimensions of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, analyzing the interaction of the «three Kyivan churches» in the broader context of global religious politics. Wanner (2022), in turn, explores everyday religiosity, showing how war and post-Soviet transformations change religious practices, languages of faith, and forms of belonging, without necessarily increasing the level of institutional religiosity.

Most of the aforementioned studies analyze religiosity either in a macrosocial dimension (through national, political, and institutional processes) or through the prism of individual socio-demographic characteristics, without paying systematic attention to the status structure of society and status (in)consistency. Thus, although status consistency and religiosity are well-studied as separate phenomena, their relationship remains insufficiently explored. This is a significant theoretical and empirical gap, since the transformations and crises of Ukrainian society create grounds to assume that religion can perform different functions depending on the consistency of status.

The prevalence of status inconsistency, which can influence religiosity, necessitates broader research into the religiosity of different status-consistent and status-inconsistent categories in Ukraine – not only among youth, and not only based on data from 2017 (Yakovenko et al., 2020). Therefore, the **aim** of our article is to identify the similarities and differences in religiosity across various consistent and inconsistent status categories, focusing on religious belief and religious motivation within the context of societal transformations and crisis events in Ukraine.

1. METHODOLOGY

Since it is important for us to identify the dynamics of differences within Ukrainian society, we turn to the waves of the World Values Survey (hereafter WVS) conducted prior to and during the hybrid war in Ukraine, given that no surveys under the auspices of WVS have been carried out on Ukrainian territory following the full-scale Russian invasion. We employ the WVS time-series dataset for the period 1981–2022 (Haerpfer et al., 2022), focusing on the Ukrainian data. The division of respondents according to different types of status consistency and inconsistency is based on variables coded as X025R (educational level, aggregated in the dataset into three categories – «low», «middle», and «upper») and X047R_WVS (income level, aggregated into three categories – «low», «medium», and «high»). Data for Ukraine are available for the years 1996, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2020; however, the necessary variables on education and income are present only in the waves of 1996, 2006, 2011, and 2020. Consequently, we restrict our analysis to these four years.

We share S. Salnikova's view of religiosity as a complex multidimensional construct, defined as «a subjective quality of the individual, manifested through a set of views and actions adhered to by an individual or group, which provides the individual/group with a system of orientation and an object of worship» (Salnikova, 2010a, p. 223). She also distinguishes two research strategies for studying this phenomenon: a generalized and a specific one. The latter is more appropriate for our paper, as it allows us to work not merely with religiosity in general but with its particular components: religious belief, religious knowledge, religious behavior, and religious motivation (Salnikova, 2010a, p. 228; Salnikova, 2010b, p. 111–114). We selected two components: 1) religious belief, examined through responses to questions on belief in God (WVS code F050), belief in hell (WVS code F053), and religiosity (WVS code F034); 2) religious motivation, examined through responses to questions on the importance of religiosity as a trait of a child (WVS code A040), the evaluation of the importance of religion in life (WVS code A006), and confidence in churches (WVS code E069_01).

Building upon the foundational study whose results we aim to verify and extend (Yakovenko et al., 2020, p. 103–104), we distinguish three categories of status-consistent respondents and two categories of status-inconsistent respondents: 1) low levels of both education and income (low consistent statuses); 2) medium levels of both education and income (medium consistent statuses); 3) high levels of both education and income (high consistent statuses); 4) high education combined with medium or low income, as well as medium education combined with low income (education–income inconsistency); 5) high income combined with medium or low education, as well as medium income combined with low education (income–education inconsistency). For the operationalization of religiosity, we selected those WVS questions that were available in at least three of the four waves conducted in Ukraine.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We begin with questions of faith, since, being the most straightforward and evident for ordinary citizens, they are most frequently actualized in the public information space during wartime. At present, numerous controversial publications and videos circulate in the media, in which the same facts – the full-scale war itself, combat clashes, regular shelling, and so forth – are presented as grounds for divergent decisions. Such decisions may include choosing not to believe in God (on the grounds that God is expected to ensure that everything is always good, and the tragic reality of events is attributed to God's will), as well as choosing to believe in God (on the basis of testimonies of miraculous escapes from death, while all negative outcomes are interpreted as consequences of human agency). According to WVS data, in 1996 Ukraine exhibited significant differences in belief in God and in the existence of hell among individuals with different combinations of educational and income statuses. Moreover, notable social differences were recorded in the perception of religiosity as an important trait of a child in 1996, 2011, and 2020 (see table 1¹). Before drawing conclusions from these data, we compared our results with findings from other studies: surveys and focus groups conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Centre (2021), (Yakymenko et al., 2024) and the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2020), as well as analyses by other authors based on data from the European Values Study (Yaremchuk, 2011), the Razumkov Centre (Pivovarova, 2014; Gmyria, 2025), the Eurobarometer, the sociological group «Rating», and Gradus Research (Gmyria, 2025).

Table 1

Relationship between Different Categories of Status (in)Consistency and Declared Beliefs, Data in %

Year of Ukraine's Participation in WVS	Consistency of Educational and Material Statuses	Believe in God	Do Not Believe in God	Believe in the Existence of Hell	Do Not Believe in the Existence of Hell	Religious Faith is an Important Trait for a Child	Religious Faith as an Unimportant Trait for a Child
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1996	Low consistent	88***	12***	60,1***	39,9***	25,7*	74,3*
	Medium consistent	72,6***	27,4***	35,2***	64,8***	20,1*	79,9*
	High consistent	68,3***	31,7***	31,8***	68,2***	8,2*	91,8*
	Education–income inconsistency	74,9***	25,1***	39,5***	60,5***	19,8*	80,2*
	Income–education inconsistency	68,8***	31,3***	33,3***	66,7***	17,9*	82,1*
2006	Low consistent	-	-	-	-	0	100
	Medium consistent	-	-	-	-	15,2	84,8
	High consistent	-	-	-	-	22,2	77,8
	Education–income inconsistency	-	-	-	-	16	84
	Income–education inconsistency	-	-	-	-	30,4	69,6
2011	Low consistent	90,7	9,3	62,8	37,2	39,5**	60,5**
	Medium consistent	89,5	10,5	52,5	47,5	18,5**	81,5**
	High consistent	75,6	24,4	60	40	29,5**	70,5**
	Education–income inconsistency	87,2	12,8	56,5	43,5	23,8**	76,2**
	Income–education inconsistency	87,9	12,1	43,9	56,1	17,2**	82,8**

¹ In tables 1–3, the significance of differences was tested using the chi-square test and, in cases of insufficient cell frequencies, the Monte Carlo method. The use of semi-bold highlighting serves both to draw attention to significantly different proportions and to illustrate, in a projective manner, the arguments advanced in the discussion regarding statistically significant differences among all status-consistent and status-inconsistent population types across the period 1996–2020.

The End of the Table 1

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2020	Low consistent	87,3	12,7	69,2	30,8	25,4**	74,6**
	Medium consistent	85,6	14,4	52,1	47,9	16,9**	83,1**
	High consistent	88,6	11,4	48,6	51,4	8,2**	91,8**
	Education–income inconsistency	83,3	16,7	53,5	46,5	13,4**	86,6**
	Income–education inconsistency	80	20	63,9	36,1	24,7**	75,3**

***Statistical significance of differences at the 0.001 level, ** – at the 0.01 level, and * – at the 0.05 level.

Source: calculated by the authors in the SPSS Statistics 27.

Taking into account the evidence reviewed, we are inclined to explain the differences in proportions presented in table 1 by noting that the year 1996 still represented a continuation of a profound crisis of identification for Ukraine: citizens were experiencing their recently acquired independence under conditions of economic instability and social uncertainty. Belief in God and in particular components of the afterlife, most strongly expressed among the least educated and materially secure status-consistent category of respondents, was most likely a consequence of seeking support and a means of compensating for individual difficulties in the transition to a market economy. At the same time, wealthier and more educated citizens had attained their status positions within the context of the Soviet atheist tradition and/or post-Soviet entrepreneurship dependent on criminal structures. Therefore, regardless of the consistency of their positions, they were subject to stronger factors encouraging skepticism toward God as the giver of blessings and toward the existence of hell for those who acquire the blessings in contradiction to Christian religious norms (given that Christianity is the most widespread religion in Ukraine). Nevertheless, we observe that income – whether high or exceeding the level of education – played the most critical role in the rejection of belief in God. This finding corresponds closely with expectations articulated in the religious texts of the dominant Christian denominations in Ukraine: one cannot serve both God and mammon (Gospel of Matthew, n. d., Chapter 6), and it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Gospel of Matthew, n. d., Chapter 19).

Until 2020, Ukraine experienced non-linear economic growth and a transition from institutional religiosity to more individualized forms of belief. This entailed the preservation of a high level of declared belief in God alongside a weakening of institutional involvement and a selective attitude toward religious norms and practices – what, following G. Davie, is termed «believing without belonging» (Yaremchuk, 2011, p. 106). Attaining higher education ceased to depend on obligatory declared atheism, and the influence of religion (in addition to its already established presence in Western Ukraine) increased in the Eastern and Southern regions. Overall, churches came to be perceived not only as transmitters of dogma but also as institutions of social support. This made religion attractive to diverse social categories, while religiosity became part of national identity, serving as a «resource of identification for uniting the group against external threat» (Tienin & Salnikova, 2025, p. 60). Following the adoption of the 1996 Constitution guaranteeing freedom of conscience, the experience of economic crises and political upheavals, the outbreak of war in Donbas after 2014, and the COVID-19 pandemic, religious faith predictably became a functional analogue of psychological support, smoothing social differences. In contrast to most European countries, where religiosity has declined, Ukraine has maintained high levels of religious belief, including among youth (Gmyria, 2025).

Nevertheless, we wish to draw attention to significant social differences in the perception of religiosity as an important trait for children, observed in 1996, 2011, and 2020 but absent in 2006. The lack of significant differences in 2006 may indicate a temporary normalization of value orientations during a period of relative economic stability and not yet actualized existential threats. We also assume that in 1996 the inculcation of religiosity as a desirable trait in child-rearing was characteristic primarily of rural residents and those of rural origin, including second-generation migrants. For them, religion remained an evidently necessary part of culture, preserved through practices such as clandestine baptisms of children in rural areas

even during the era of official atheist ideology. Clearly, citizens with low consistent statuses were most supportive of religiosity as a trait in child-rearing. Yet overall, the distinction lies more in the divergence of opinions among citizens with high consistent statuses compared to all other categories, with certain nuances. These may have been urban residents of two or more generations, whose everyday Soviet environment offered fewer opportunities both to know and to remember religiosity.

Against the backdrop of economic stabilization and globalization (the spread of ideas of tolerance, the legitimacy of pluralism, secular views, etc.), social differences were smoothed, not least due to the institution of education, which emphasized universal values rather than religious interpretations. By 2020, the state and churches sought to strengthen cooperation in the sphere of youth education, given the tangible advantages of religious education (for example, its effectiveness in preserving identity and moral orientation). This reinforced the role of religion in child-rearing. Yet with increasing citizen engagement in the global information space and the desire to conform to «progressive ideas» and «generally accepted moral norms» in pursuit of life success, secular models of upbringing appeared more attractive. According to Razumkov Centre data from 2021, the share of Ukrainians opposing the teaching of religion in schools rose to 43 %, while support for compulsory or elective religious instruction declined. Similar tendencies are confirmed by general reviews of Ukraine's WVS results from both secular and religious perspectives (BBC News Ukraine, 2020; Yakobchuk, 2020) and expert assessments of religious education (Lomachynska & Uzhva, 2020).

However, the reactions of representatives of different status categories to internal political instability and external threats such as hybrid war and the COVID-19 pandemic do not provide grounds for asserting the predictability of how carriers of status consistency and inconsistency perceive the socio-integrative advantages of religiosity for children. Views on children's religiosity were consistently most positive among the low-status consistent category, which appears logical given our earlier reflections on the expected incompatibility of serving both God and the ideals of the secular world. By contrast, the so-called «middle class» (consistent medium education and income) together with the «middle class by perception» (status inconsistency in favor of education) were more inclined toward enhancing the prestige of their current position in this world. At the same time, considering fluctuations in proportions in Table 1, even the least educated and materially secure citizens could perceive the dangers present in 2020 as a signal to focus first on physical survival and only thereafter on religious norms (like in Soviet experience). Meanwhile, even the most materially secure citizens, whether with congruent or incongruent education, could polarize their attitudes toward children's religiosity.

According to our assumptions, high-status consistency more often prompted respondents to reject the importance of children's religiosity due to a projective idealization of the «21st century» as an era of sufficient conditions for humanity's moral self-regulation within civilizational comfort, and specifically due to observations of radical negative reactions to COVID-19 vaccines among certain religious individuals. Conversely, inconsistency in favor of income more strongly encouraged the cultivation of religiosity as a guarantee of preserving necessary moral orientations in children. This aligns with the strategy of «obtaining a profession rather than [higher] education», which may have been more popular among respondents with income–education inconsistency. In such cases, moral regulation is acquired primarily through professional social relations and more often requires an independent search for a clear and convincing normative structure.

Next, we examine the similarities and differences among individuals with different combinations of educational and income statuses in their declared importance of religion in life, personal religiosity, and confidence in churches. Significant social differences in this regard were equally present in 1996 and 2011, and equally absent in 2006 and 2020 (see tables 2 and 3). With respect to 1996, it is logical to continue reflections on economic crisis and social anomie as reasons why less protected strata of the population more frequently sought moral support in religion and social solidarity among like-minded individuals familiar with the same religious texts, canons, and rituals, and grounded in corresponding meanings of life. Citizens with low consistent statuses and those with inconsistency in favor of education fully fit the definition of the least economically protected: the former had few chances for well-paid non-physical work and the ability to save, while the latter experienced sharper perceptions of social injustice and the mismatch between the resources invested in education and the rewards received. For other combined status categories, religion was

more an interesting part of cultural heritage than a firm spiritual support or an inseparable marker of social status. Yet in subsequent years of non-linear GDP's and living standards' growth up to 2020, the differences identified were not always smoothed.

Table 2

Relationship between Different Categories of Status (in)Consistency and the Declared Importance of Religion and Religiosity, Data in %

Year of Ukraine's Participation in WVS	Consistency of Educational and Material Statuses	Religion is Very Important in Life	Religion is Rather Important in Life	Religion is Not Very Important in Life	Religion is Not at All Important in Life	Religious Person	Not a Religious Person	Convinced Atheist
1996	Low consistent	34,2***	34,6***	18,1***	13,2***	74,6***	23,4***	2***
	Medium consistent	15,6***	32,5***	27,3***	24,6***	56,3***	39***	4,7***
	High consistent	15,4***	30,8***	33,8***	20***	59,3***	39***	1,7***
	Education–income inconsistency	21,3***	32,7***	27,6***	18,3***	63,8***	31,9***	4,3***
	Income–education inconsistency	13,7***	29,5***	33,1***	23,7***	56,1***	35,6***	8,3***
2006	Low consistent	31,8	45,5	22,7	0	87	13	0
	Medium consistent	21,2	39,6	24,8	14,4	82,8	15,9	1,3
	High consistent	15,4	34,6	34,6	15,4	79,2	16,7	4,2
	Education–income inconsistency	16,5	38,6	28,7	16,3	79,6	16	4,4
	Income–education inconsistency	14,3	33,3	33,3	19	78,3	21,7	0
2011	Low consistent	48,8*	16,3*	18,6*	16,3*	76,7*	18,6*	4,7*
	Medium consistent	25*	34*	27,9*	13,1*	65,5*	30,6*	3,9*
	High consistent	20,5*	31,8*	38,6*	9,1*	68,2*	18,2*	13,6*
	Education–income inconsistency	26*	36,5*	24,9*	12,7*	69,2*	25,9*	4,9*
	Income–education inconsistency	29,3*	27,6*	31*	12,1*	75,4*	19,3*	5,3*
2020	Low consistent	33,9	40,7	8,5	16,9	73,8	21,3	4,9
	Medium consistent	25,3	39,7	19,9	15,1	62,6	28,6	8,8
	High consistent	25	45,8	16,7	12,5	75	18,2	6,8
	Education–income inconsistency	22,2	43,5	19	15,3	62	31,3	6,6
	Income–education inconsistency	31,9	40,6	13	14,5	72,1	22,1	5,9

***Statistical significance of differences at the 0.001 level, ** – at the 0.01 level, and * – at the 0.05 level.

Source: calculated by the authors in the SPSS Statistics 27.

Table 3

Relationship between Different Categories of Status (in)Consistency and Declared Confidence in Churches, Data in %

Year of Ukraine's Participation in WVS	Consistency of Educational and Material Statuses	Confidence in Churches – a Great Deal	Confidence in Churches – Quite a Lot	Confidence in Churches – Not Very Much	Confidence in Churches – None at All
1996	Low consistent	45,5***	31,3***	16,3***	6,9***
	Medium consistent	25,6***	40***	24,4***	10***
	High consistent	19,4***	50***	16,1***	14,5***
	Education–income inconsistency	26,6***	39,2***	23,2***	11,1***
	Income–education inconsistency	20,9***	40,3***	23,9***	14,9***
2006	Low consistent statuses	31,3	62,5	6,3	0
	Medium consistent statuses	25,3	50	17,9	6,8
	High consistent statuses	23,1	57,7	15,4	3,8
	Education–income inconsistency	20,4	49,7	20,4	9,4
	Income–education inconsistency	33,3	38,1	9,5	19
2011	Low consistent	57,1**	26,2**	7,1**	9,5**
	Medium consistent	32,1**	45,1**	15,9**	6,9**
	High consistent	22,2**	48,9**	24,4**	4,4**
	Education–income inconsistency	33**	39,8**	17,6**	9,6**
	Income–education inconsistency	36,8**	52,6**	7**	3,5**
2020	Low consistent	37,1	37,1	11,3	14,5
	Medium consistent	33,3	45,8	12,4	8,5
	High consistent	31,3	37,5	16,7	14,6
	Education–income inconsistency	27,7	43,2	15,5	13,6
	Income–education inconsistency	34,2	39,7	13,7	12,3

***Statistical significance of differences at the 0.001 level, ** – at the 0.01 level, and * – at the 0.05 level.

Source: calculated by the authors in the SPSS Statistics 27.

The departure from religion, religiosity, and trust in churches by a noticeably larger share of respondents with high status consistency in 2011 may have been caused by disillusionment with the public demonstrations of religiosity by well-known businessmen, politicians, and public figures. These displays were suspected of being more a tribute to new social fashion, a formal component of tradition, an instrument of positive image-building, or a means of establishing useful contacts—and the fact that such behavior was tolerated reinforced this perception. Moreover, religious media themselves occasionally republished analytical texts that ironically disparaged church life, thereby creating a typically negative impression of the true motives for attending churches even among ordinary citizens. For example, there was a precedent on 4 February 2022, when the website of the All-Ukrainian Sobor reprinted¹ a publication by D. Horyevoy with the following conclusion: «So, the first who officially announces the installation of benches in the churches of his jurisdiction will reap the «cream of conversions»²». It should also be noted that mastering prestigious and lucrative professions often immerses individuals in environments where it is easier to present oneself, or even to become, an atheist, much as in the Soviet Union; furthermore, if high-status consistency is attained at a young age, the desire to be free from any conventions may itself push individuals away from religion and religiosity (Halichenko & Boiko, 2020, p. 20).

Conversely, the turn toward religion, religiosity, and trust in churches by a noticeably larger share of respondents with inconsistency in favor of income in 2011 may have occurred both because they positively regarded religious practices as a form of advantageous symbolic investment and because of a sincere search

¹ The reprint of the original paper is available at the link <https://sobor.com.ua/news/religiinist-ukrayinciv>

² The original paper is available at the link https://lb.ua/society/2022/02/02/504398_yak_zminyuvalas_religiynist.html

for relief from personal existential problems and for the development of their own spirituality, given that the place of authority in such matters was not occupied by education. The preceding year, 2006, despite turbulence and tension in Ukraine's political sphere, was balanced by relative economic calm (excluding the gas crisis), as well as by the harmonization of interconfessional and state–church relations and an emphasis on the primacy of individual religious freedom over communal or corporate forms (National Institute for Strategic Studies, 2007, p. 45–50). Regarding the situation in 2020, it is worth noting that even now, during the full-scale war, fairly typical religiously neutral expectations are articulated at the highest levels of governance: society expects churches to engage more actively in addressing social problems, providing social services, humanitarian assistance, and intensifying activity in the international arena to defend Ukraine's interests¹. By analogy, it is reasonable to assume that representatives of all status-consistent and status-inconsistent categories in both 2006 and 2020 had no particular grounds to turn away from religion and churches, since ideas of religious tolerance and *oikonomia*² toward believers were widespread, and churches adapted themselves to citizens more than citizens adapted to churches.

Turning to the discussion, it is important to emphasize that «confidence in churches» requires clarification, as this indicator has a complex and multifaceted nature. As P. Tienin and S. Salnikova note, the very term «confidence» in a religious context may carry several connotations. First, it is often perceived more as an emotional than a rational indicator. Second, its measurement intertwines macro- and micro-levels of confidence (for example, confidence in the church as an institution and confidence in a specific religious leader). In addition, the indicator may be influenced by the general level of trust in society, particularly if society is in an ambivalent state, as well as by political and confessional conflicts that can significantly distort perceptions of trust (Tienin & Salnikova, 2025, p. 58–59). Thus, interpretation of data on the variable «trust in churches» must always be approached with great caution.

Since at the outset we drew upon a specific study of youth religiosity in Ukraine, which included somewhat similar questions (Yakovenko et al, 2020, p. 104, 107), it is appropriate to attempt a comparison of the results previously obtained by that team of authors with our current findings. The authors of the selected study worked with the data from «Ukrainian Generation Z: Values and Orientations» survey (sometimes referred to under the alternative general title «Youth of Ukraine 2017»), collected in 2017. They argued, among other points, the following:

1) a weaker importance of God in life was more often associated with inconsistency in favor of income, while low-status consistency encouraged more frequent selection of non-moderate (i.e., polar rather than balanced) statements; among high-status consistent youth, the highest aggregate indicator of the importance of God (medium plus high importance) was observed;

2) in general terms, the coincidence of religious views was more often important for youth with low status consistency when choosing a marital partner and friends, whereas youth with high status consistency were more moderate in considering religious views as a criterion for choosing a marital partner and were most open to friends of other religions;

3) the highest level of trust in the Church and religious organizations was more often associated with inconsistency in favor of income; the highest aggregate indicators of medium and high trust were found among that inconsistent category of youth and among low-status consistent youth, whereas high-status consistent youth more frequently selected polar statements.

We cannot fully compare respondents' answers due to differences not only in their age but also in the survey methodology of WVS compared to that of the New Europe Center, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and GfK Ukraine. Belief in God and the importance of religion are not identical to the importance of God; the importance of religiosity as a child's trait is motivated differently than the motivation to regard religious views as important for family formation or friendship circles. Ultimately, «Church and religious

¹ One may note, for example, the case of emphasis placed on this issue by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience at the beginning of 2025, on the basis of the findings of the Razumkov Centre's research. The corresponding news item is available at the link <https://dessa.gov.ua/dovira-do-tserkvy-zalyshaietsia-stabilno-vysokoju-doslidzhennia-tsentru-razumkova/>, while the original study may be accessed at <https://razumkov.org.ua/images/2025/01/28/2024-Religiya-religion-FIN.pdf>

² In a religious context, «*oikonomia*» denotes the flexible and merciful application of canons for the sake of human salvation, in contrast to the strict observance known as «*akribeia*».

organizations» is not identical to «churches» – the latter term is simultaneously narrower and broader, since it recognizes the existence of only one true church among all churches and potentially introduces into the evaluation more organizations than can be encompassed by the terms «confession» or «denomination». There is also a programming nuance regarding the status categories and dependent variables: A. Yakovenko, Yu. Yakovenko, and A. Tashchenko grouped nominal response alternatives according to their own logic, whereas we relied on the distributional decisions already provided by WVS experts without recoding. Nevertheless, we would like to highlight the contrast between the general tendencies in the 2020 baseline article and in our study. Among youth aged 14–29 in 2017, across 12 analyzed indicators directly related to religiosity, the most religious group in a specific pluralist sense appeared to be youth with high status consistency. According to our findings, among Ukrainian residents aged 18 and older between 1996 and 2020, across 6 analyzed indicators, representatives of the high-status consistent category, on the contrary, demonstrated the greatest detachment from faith, religion, and churches. Accordingly, several needs for clarification arise for both the baseline and our study:

1) since the 2020 article presented only basic information typical of rapid reports (in particular, without indicating statistical significance of differences), it would be appropriate to return to the dataset «Ukrainian Generation Z: Values and Orientations» and refine the results without merging response alternatives in dependent variables where possible, as well as to check for the presence in the 2017 dataset of other indicators of religiosity corresponding to those in WVS, and to incorporate a broader set of religiosity questions from WVS for comparison;

2) in our paper, we did not examine the age profiles of different combined status categories, which would be appropriate to do in the future to understand whether the shares of more religious high-status consistent citizens are filled primarily by youth under 30;

3) in constructing Tables 1–3, we have thus far overlooked the fact that for all variables considered there was statistical significance in the differences of religiosity among the combined status types if we take their data for all years together. That is, if we compare the responses of representatives of each of the five types cumulatively across all WVS waves, they differ at the 0.001 level in questions of belief in God, belief in hell, importance of religion in life, and trust in churches, and at the 0.01 level in questions of the importance of religiosity as a child's trait and self-declared religiosity. By means of semi-bold highlighting we invited attention to certain proportions that did not have statistically significant differences from others within a given year of analysis, yet suggested the hypothetical presence of certain models of religious belief and religious motivation recurring year after year. Thus, a separate analysis of these general «atemporal» models of religiosity across different combined status types, with the addition of age profiles, may provide information about who is more predisposed to adherence to faith, religion, and its institutional embodiment in the context of serious social upheavals and periods of recovery.

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH PROSPECTS

The results obtained indicate that religiosity in Ukraine is partly associated with status (in)consistency and changes in relation to entry into large-scale crisis events and exit from them. Belief in God remained the most stable characteristic throughout the analyzed period; however, its functional content varied significantly across different status categories and cyclically lost distinctions in accordance with recent historical micro-stages. Low-status consistency in most cases coincided with higher levels of declared belief and a more positive attitude toward religiosity as a socio-integrative resource, which became particularly salient during periods of socially perceptible instability. Both high- and medium- status consistency, by contrast, was more often associated with distancing from religion, lower confidence in churches, and less inclination to regard religiosity as a desirable trait in child-rearing – an outcome that may be interpreted as the result of combining educational capital, secular orientations, and a striving for autonomy from traditional institutions. Educational–income inconsistency was more frequently accompanied by a critical attitude toward religion and churches, whereas income–education inconsistency in several cases was associated with higher positive indicators of religious belief and religious motivation.

Taken together, differences among representatives of various combined status categories were most pronounced in 1996 and 2011, while in 2006 and 2020 they were noticeably leveled. Yet although distributions of data on declared belief in God and in the existence of hell, the desirability of religiosity for

children, the importance of religion, personal religiosity, and trust in churches in 2006 and 2020 became more similar across different combined status categories, traces of hypothetically more stable models of religious belief and religious motivation were still observable – models that require further investigation. Prospects in this direction involve not only refining specific empirical indicators but also expanding the analytical framework. First, deepening the analysis of age profiles across all status-consistent and status-inconsistent categories appears important. Second, it is advisable to broaden the set of religiosity indicators, particularly by analyzing components of religious behavior and religious knowledge in WVS data. Third, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative methods (in-depth interviews, focus groups) would allow for a better understanding of the subjective meanings of religiosity, trust in churches, and status inconsistency under conditions of war and postwar recovery. It would also be useful to compare the religiosity of different combined status categories in Ukraine with that of combined status categories in other countries experiencing crises and wars of different character.

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